



United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development
Huron State Office



ELSIE M. MEEKS
State Director – South Dakota

BIOGRAPHY

Elsie Meeks was named State Director of the USDA Rural Development in South Dakota by the Obama Administration on July 27, 2009. In this capacity, she coordinates the efforts of 72 employees to work with others to ensure use of resources and 40 + programs are serving rural South Dakota residents. Through her leadership, communities and rural residents will have the opportunity to develop and grow while also improving their quality of life.

Meeks has several years of experience working to promote economic and community development. In addition, she sits on the board of Northwest Area Foundation. Prior to joining USDA, Meeks was the President/CEO of First Nations Oweesta Corporation and has over 20 years experience working for Native community economic development.

Before her leadership and work at Oweesta, Meeks was active for 20 years in the development and management of The Lakota Funds, a small business and microenterprise development loan fund CDFI on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. She served as chairperson of The Lakota Funds and was a board member of Corporation for Enterprise Development, Council on Foundations and the Oglala Sioux Tribe Partnership for Housing. She was also an International Advisory Council member of Native Nations Institute and on the Board of Governors for the Honoring Nations program of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.

Meeks completed a six-year term on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and was the first Native American to serve on the Commission. She was the chairperson for the Native Financial Education Coalition, for which Oweesta served as the lead organization.

Meeks and her husband Jim make their home on their ranch near Kyle, SD on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Rural Development is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in all of rural America by providing financial programs to support essential public facilities and services as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities and electric and telephone service. Rural Development invested more than \$353 million in Fiscal Year 2010 and \$2.78 billion over the past 10 years in South Dakota's economy.

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Committed to the future of rural communities.

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